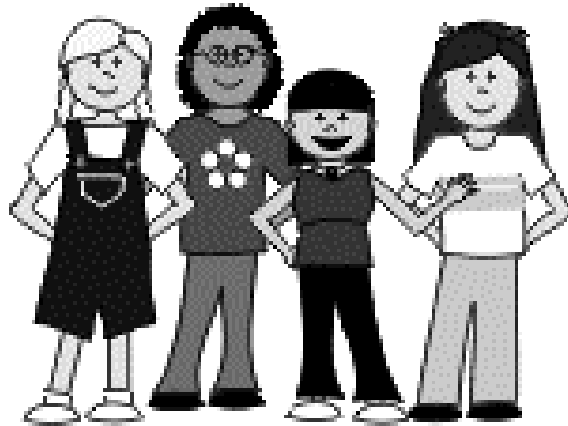


# GIRLS AND MARIJUANA USE



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Resource Center  
State of California  
Alcohol and Drug Programs  
1700 K Street  
First Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

(800) 879-2772 (California Only)  
(916) 327-3728  
FAX: (916) 323-1270  
TTY: (916) 445-1942  
Internet: <http://www.adp.ca.gov>  
E-Mail: [ResourceCenter@adp.state.ca.us](mailto:ResourceCenter@adp.state.ca.us)

## What's New

Preteen to young adolescence represents a particularly vulnerable age for females -- a time when values and attitudes are formed and self-esteem is either strengthened or weakened. Girls aged 9 to 14, in transition from childhood to adulthood, are especially susceptible to social and environmental influences. Peer pressure -- the "everybody's doing it" syndrome -- and the pervasiveness of pop culture icons that contain pro-marijuana messages can influence girls to use this drug before they ever understand its consequences.

The 1998 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse showed that nearly 8% of 12-to-17 year old females had used marijuana in the preceding month, and nearly 16% had used marijuana in the past year. The Centers for Disease Control reported in their 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Surveys that approximately 43% of high school girls had used marijuana.

**Female adolescents who become chronic marijuana smokers face a greater risk of:**

- unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS
- raised testosterone levels, which can result in increased facial and body hair and acne
- increased risk of infertility
- car crashes—one of the biggest killers of teenagers

## What's New

Marijuana use can impair memory, learning, and motivation. Young women who use marijuana regularly report that they are unable to maintain satisfactory grades and academic performance levels. With chronic marijuana use, a girl's ambitions and dreams can go up in smoke.

Adults can help girls during the vulnerable time between ages 9 to 14 by paying close attention to a girl's self esteem and emotional development, which affect her ability to make positive choices. Offer plenty of encouragement, support and -- by far the most important -- time together engaging in positive activities.

